DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 466 412 SO 033 940

AUTHOR Keime, Susan; Landes, Melissa; Rickertsen, Gwenn; Wescott, Nicol

TITLE Promoting Cultural Awareness and the Acceptance of Diversity through the Implementation of Cross-Cultural Activities.

PUB DATE 2002-05-00

NOTE 43p.; Master of Arts Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and SkyLight Professional Development Field-Based Master's Program.

PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Action Research; *Attitude Change; Change Strategies; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Pluralism; Grade 3; High School Students; High Schools; Intervention; Primary Education; Rural Areas; Student Surveys; Teacher Surveys

IDENTIFIERS Illinois; Multicultural Materials; *Tolerance

ABSTRACT

An action research project implemented a program for developing tolerance through increased cultural awareness. Targeted population consisted of third grade and high school students in a rural, middle class community in western Illinois. The problem of lack of cultural awareness was documented through standardized test scores and student and teacher survey data. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students were not exposed to teachers or students from different ethnic backgrounds. Faculty reported not being provided with proper training or curriculum materials to prepare them to deal with multicultural education. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with analysis of the problem setting, resulted in a two-part intervention focusing on integrating multicultural materials, information, and activities into the curriculum, combined with providing a climate that promoted tolerance. The interventions appeared to modify student perceptions about culture and created a sense of tolerance. The study concluded that the impact of school interventions does not always overlap with home, and it is easier to change values at a younger age than when students' attitudes are already formed. Both elementary and high school students were more readily able to identify differences rather than similarities among cultures. The implication for teaching is that educators must shift the focus from accentuating the distinctions among cultures to the similarities found among all people. Appended are cultural awareness surveys for teachers, third-grade students, high school students, and an activity survey. (Contains 11 tables and 29 references.) (Author/BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 466 412

PROMOTING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Susan Keime
Melissa Landes
Gwenn Rickertsen
Nicol Wescott

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

SO 033 940

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight

Field-Based Master's Program

Chicago, Illinois

May 2002

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Rickertsen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ABSTRACT

TITLE: IMPROVING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND PROMOTING ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Authors: Susan Keime, Melissa Landes, Gwenn Rickertsen , Nicol Wescott

Date: May, 2002

This report describes a program for developing tolerance through increased cultural awareness. The targeted population consisted of third grade and high school students in a rural, middle class community, located in Western Illinois. The problem of a lack of cultural awareness was documented through standardized test scores and data revealed through student and teacher surveys.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students are not exposed to teachers or students that from different ethnic backgrounds. Faculty reported that they are not provided with proper training or curriculum materials that prepare them to deal with multicultural education.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with analysis of the problem setting, resulted in a two part intervention. The intervention focused on integrating multicultural materials, information, and activities into the curriculum, combined with providing a climate that promoted tolerance.

Researchers found that the interventions appeared to have modified the students' perceptions about culture and created a sense of tolerance. The researchers concluded that the impact of school interventions do not always carry over to the home and it is easier to change values at a younger age than when students' attitudes are already formed. Both elementary and high school students were more readily able to identify differences rather than similarities between cultures. The implication for teaching is that educators must shift the focus from accentuating the distinction between cultures to the similarities found among all people.

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

H. Nancy Frakes, Ph.D.
Advisor

John B. Nunley Ed.D.
Advisor

Beverly Gulley
Dean, School of Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT 1

General Statement of the Problem 1

Immediate Problem Context 1

The Surrounding Community 3

National Context of the Problem 4

CHAPTER 2 - PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION 6

Problem Evidence 6

Probable Causes 12

CHAPTER 3 - THE SOLUTION STRATEGY 15

Literature Review 15

Project Objective and Processes 18

Action Plan 19

Methods of Assessment 20

CHAPTER 4 - PROJECT RESULTS 21

Historical Description of the Intervention 21

Presentation and Analysis of Results 22

Conclusions and Recommendations 28

REFERENCES 31

APPENDICES 33

Appendix A - Teacher Survey 33

Appendix B - Third Grade Survey 34

Appendix C - High School Survey 35

Appendix D - Activity Survey 36

Appendix E - Teacher Journal 37

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The targeted elementary and secondary students exhibited a lack of cultural awareness that limited their social growth and development. Evidence for the existence of the problem included a lack of cultural diversity in the community, the exhibition of stereotypical views, inadequate curriculum materials, and low academic performance on social studies tests.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted schools were School A, a high school, which had 400 students with an average class size of 19. School B, an elementary school, had 300 students with an average class size of 22. The district had a population that was 1% Hispanic and 99% White. The daily attendance rate for School A was 95%, with a 1% chronic truancy problem, and a 4% mobility rate. School B had a 97% attendance rate, with no chronic truancy problem, and a 6% mobility rate. Eight percent of the children in School A were from low-income families and received free or reduced cost lunches. School B had 24% of the children from low-income families who received free or reduced cost lunches.

The faculty in School A consisted of 32 classroom teachers, a media specialist, and a counselor. The average teaching experience was 18 years. The faculty in School B consisted of 22

specialized teachers, 3 aides, a part-time media specialist, and a guidance counselor. The average teaching experience was 15 years. Ninety-eight percent of the teachers in the district were White and 2% were Hispanic. The school board consisted of seven elected members. The administration consisted of a superintendent and four principals for the district.

There were four school buildings in the district. One building housed grades K-2, the second housed grades 3-5, the third building housed grades 6-8, and the fourth building housed grades 9-12. Each elementary grade K-8 was divided into 4 homeroom classes. The high school was divided into departments by subject area. All classrooms K-12 were equipped with at least one classroom computer. The elementary building, junior high building, and high school building also had at least one computer lab.

School A offered special education services including team-taught sections, resource services, and inclusion. Vocational and post secondary counseling was available through the high school counselor. Students at School A were offered classes through an area vocational center. Targeted School B had a Title 1 program available for students in reading. Self-contained and resource services were provided for students in the special education program. A gifted education class in the area of reading was available. An after school tutoring program was conducted three days a week. There was also a teacher of at-risk students and a counselor available. Speech and language services were provided if needed.

Students were exposed to band and chorus for extracurricular activities in fifth grade. Other extracurricular programs were added in sixth grade which included student council, basketball, volleyball, swimming, track, and cheer leading. In addition to the above mentioned activities, the high school offered pom pons, Key Club, Spanish Club, wrestling, football, softball, baseball, drama activities, and Spirit Club.

The Surrounding Community

The targeted schools were located in northwestern Illinois near the Mississippi River. The community had easy access to two major U.S. highways and the Union Pacific Railroad. The population of the targeted town was 4,400, with one school district, made up of citizens of the town and students bused in from rural areas. The citizens of the school district were 98% White, and were of Dutch descent. The remainder of the population contained only 1% Hispanic with few other minorities. Approximately 29% of the citizens were between the age of 25 and 44, with the median age in the community being 38.

The targeted community was settled in 1857 and was the county seat. Two manufacturing companies were the major employers in the community. Other major employers included the local hospital, the sheriff's department, and the school district. Approximately 2% of the community was employed in agriculture and agri-business while 28% was employed in manufacturing. Retail and wholesale trade made up 20% of the population, while 27% of employment supplied services. Thirty-three percent of the community was made up of white collar workers, while 37% of the community was made up of blue collar workers.

For a small rural community, the targeted area offered a wide variety of recreational activities. There were three city parks, and the city purchased several acres to build another park south of town. North of town there was a state park located on the outskirts of the community which had camping, fishing, boating, hiking, an equestrian trail, and cross country skiing. The high school had an indoor swimming pool open to the community in the summer. Roller skating was available at the local rink in the center of the community. A county fair was held each summer for one week on grounds located within the city limits.

The community supported 12 churches of which 11 were Protestant and one was Catholic. A new public library was built within the last five years. Two museums were open to the public. A community music theater group was active and presented musicals at the high school auditorium which had 700 seats.

Some of the identified problems were a lack of new industry, substance abuse, lack of hospital financial support, and absence of a railroad bypass. Because of the geographical location and size of the targeted community, many residents worked and shopped outside of the community. The community purchased land for an industrial park to provide more employment to the area. The land at the time of the research had not been developed. The community had a Drug Alcohol Violence Committee in place which worked for positive ways to deal with those problems. The targeted community also utilized the DARE program. Financial support for the hospital in the community was no longer financed by tax support from surrounding communities. After several railroad fatalities, the community searched for ways to finance an overpass.

National Context of the Problem

The problem of lack of cultural awareness limiting social growth and development has generated concern at the state and national levels. King (2001) stated that although 90% of the teaching force is White, there has been a steady increase in the numbers of minority youth enrolled in school. As a result of these demographics, immediate teacher training in multicultural education is needed. King also recognized that no single ethnic group has the luxury of remaining ignorant of other cultures within the United States.

As classrooms will see an increasing number of minority children, many concerns have been brought to the forefront. One concern that Cohen (1986) discussed was immigration, and the fact that the United States has taken in many more immigrants than any other nation in the world. Not only has the United States accepted more immigrants, but these immigrants have

come from many countries, creating a very diverse enrollment in the nation's schools.

A concern raised by Gomez (1991) was that the views of children are formed at a very early age. The problem is compounded by the fact that children are easily influenced by their caregivers' attitudes, opinions, and culture. The fact that many minority children are being taught by White faculty may lead to the development of stereotyping. Takaki (2001) carried this concern even further with his view that the behaviors, habits, and attitudes that children learn at this early age more than likely carry through to their adult years. Therefore it has become the responsibility of all educators and caregivers to help children develop tolerant attitudes.

The findings of these researchers and other qualified professionals agree that a lack of cultural awareness limits young children and follows them into adulthood. Studies have shown that the minority population will increase, thereby compounding the problem of intolerance that already exists today unless steps are taken to promote understanding and cultural awareness.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

The targeted elementary and secondary students exhibited many types of evidence that supported the need for multicultural awareness. Information concerning students' knowledge and tolerance of other cultures was gathered through student surveys, activity surveys, teacher surveys, and social studies test scores.

Student and teacher surveys were created and designed by the researchers. The purpose of the surveys was to gain baseline data for understanding teachers' and students' attitudes and values towards other cultures.

The 45 targeted elementary students completed a survey to determine the students' knowledge of cultures other than their own. The results of the survey are shown in Table 1. Of the 45 students surveyed, 57% of them had never been in a class with an African American student, while 43% had either seldom or only sometimes been in a class with an African American student. On a similar note, 57% of the students had never had a person of another race enter their home. Of the 45 students surveyed only 20% had usually or always heard someone speak in a foreign language. Apparently, the students who participated in this survey had not had much exposure to individuals from other cultures.

Table 1

Percentage of Responses on a Cultural Awareness Survey for Third Grade Students

Question	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Treat others	36	46	16	2	0
Been in class	0	0	22	21	57
Choose action figures	5	8	40	24	23
Hear put-downs	5	13	24	22	36
Enter home	5	2	15	21	57
Eaten food	7	8	58	16	11
Played a game	7	11	22	27	33
Heard someone speak	4	16	42	22	16
Read books	17	7	40	21	15
Choose a friend	36	22	33	5	4

n=45

Thirty-four targeted high school students responded to the student survey. The results of the student survey are shown in Table 2. Of the 34 high school students surveyed only 15% answered usually or always to the question regarding individuals from other cultures visiting their homes. Over 40% of the students indicated that they would be somewhat uncomfortable dating someone from another race. Table 2 shows that 91% of the students have only rarely been in class with a student of another race. The data presented in Table 2 show further evidence of the lack of awareness exhibited by the targeted students.

Table 2

Percentage of Responses to a Cultural Awareness Survey for High School Students

Question	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Treat others	9	74	17	0	0
Have been in a class	0	9	44	38	9
Racial put-downs in the hall	9	9	26	30	26
Played with action figures	3	17	44	30	6
Enter home	6	9	26	33	26
Comfortable dating	33	26	18	15	8
Family offended	9	6	21	24	40
See a doctor of another race	53	32	6	9	0
New student accepted	33	38	23	6	0
Exposed to information	18	18	29	35	0

n=34

Forty-five targeted third grade students were given an activity survey during one class period. The results of the activity survey are shown in Table 3. Table 3 shows that 69% of the third grade students had difficulty articulating a problem and solution that one may face when attempting to integrate into a new culture. When asked to name a food from another culture, 72% of the students could not, and 67% were unable to name a tradition from another culture. Also shown in Table 3 is that 78% of students surveyed could not name a custom that their family follows that originated in another country.

Table 3

Percentage of Responses to an Activity Survey for Third Grade Students

Question	Yes	No
Name a food of another culture	28	72
Name a tradition of another culture	33	67
Name similarity	37	63
Name difference	35	65
Select picture for journal entry	44	56
Name a problem and give solution	31	69
Would switch cultures for a month	70	30
Name foreign custom of your family	22	78

n=45

Thirty-four targeted high school students were given an activity survey during one class period. The researchers noted, as shown in Table 4, that the targeted students were very capable of naming differences that existed among cultures. However, when asked to name similarities found between cultures only 32% were able to articulate an answer. Educators may be doing a poor job of showing the commonalities that exist between cultures. When asked to do a journal entry choosing a picture randomly from a stack of cards, 67% of the students did not choose a person of a different race; most students chose a person to write about who appeared to be from a similar culture, race, or ethnic group.

Table 4

Percentage of Responses on an Activity Survey for High School Students

Question	Yes	No
Name a food of another culture	100	0
Name a tradition of another culture	91	9
Name a similarity	32	68
Name a difference	94	6
Select a picture for journal entry	33	67
Name a problem and give solution	100	0
Would switch cultures for a month	68	32
Name a foreign custom of your family	62	38

n=34

Thirty-eight teachers responded to a cultural awareness survey. The results are shown in Table 5. Only 15% of the surveyed teachers felt that they knew in teachable detail about the viewpoints, experiences, and needs of diverse cultural groups. The targeted educators responded that 93% of their students held stereotypical views of minorities. Of the teachers surveyed, only 27% felt that their teacher training had generally prepared them to deal with children from ethnic backgrounds different from their own.

Table 5

Percentage of Responses on a Cultural Awareness Survey for Teachers

Question	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Similar ethnic background	15	80	2	2	0
Know detail about cultures	0	15	63	2	0
Select unbiased materials	5	40	30	18	0
Various student backgrounds	10	38	25	2	0
Hear students using racial slurs	0	5	25	55	13
Stereotypical beliefs	0	30	55	8	2
Multicultural curriculum	10	23	48	15	0
Media perpetuates views	5	23	30	38	0
Sufficient teachers training	2	25	30	35	2

n=38

The researchers examined social science test scores within the district. Ample evidence was found to demonstrate the fact that students in the targeted school district exhibited weak standardized test scores in the area of social studies. All students in the fourth grade were tested in the spring of 2000. Of the students tested, 26% either achieved below standard, or were placed on academic warning on the ISAT test. In seventh grade all students were tested. Of the 83 students tested, 30% were either below standard, or placed on academic warning. Researchers used this evidence to further conclude that the lack of exposure to cultural diversity in the targeted community greatly impacted the students' academic performance.

Probable Causes

The reality of rural America shows the majority of school age children come from a White middle-class background, with little exposure to individuals of other backgrounds (Holm, 1995). Teachers in the targeted midwestern community noted three probable causes for the lack of cultural awareness in their students. These causes included few opportunities for students to interact with people of other cultures, the influence of stereotypical language used in their environment, and the portrayal of minorities in the media. Finally, the lack of exposure to teachers who are equipped with training and materials to deal with multicultural education is another facet of this problem.

The demographics of the targeted schools clearly show probable cause for the lack of cultural awareness. The targeted schools consisted of a 99% White population. The faculty consisted of 98% White with only 2% Hispanic. The surrounding community had demographics very similar to that of the targeted schools. The community as a whole was 98% White, with a strong Dutch heritage.

Through informal conversations between teachers and students, and teacher observations, researchers noted the stereotypical views of students. Not only did researchers observe improper language usage, but also observed intolerant viewpoints expressed during classroom discussions. During problem solving activities focused on social issues, students voiced narrow minded viewpoints. Third graders were observed using derogatory connotations aimed at various minority groups while on the playground.

The faculty of the targeted schools consisted of an overwhelming majority of White teachers. Coupled with this statistic was the fact that many teachers did not find it necessary to incorporate multicultural education into their curriculums. This problem was compounded by the fact that the current textbooks presented a Eurocentric perspective.

The literature points to the fact that there are several probable causes for a lack of cultural awareness in American students. One of these causes is the widespread change in demographics in the United States. A second probable cause suggested by the literature is the general lack of teacher training and available materials dealing with multicultural education. The literature also proposes that many students' stereotypical views tend to be formed early in life and continue into adulthood.

The population trends in the United States indicate shifts that changed the colors and cultures of its citizens (Cross-cultural communication, 2001). Because of higher birthrates and trends in immigration, by the year 2010 more than one third of the American people will be minority, with upwards of 50% of school-aged children being minority. According to Meachem (2000), by 2050 Whites will account for only 53% of the population of the United States.

As reported by Anderson (1995), teacher training in multicultural education is a challenge facing teacher education. During a period when the student population is growing more diverse, the teacher population is growing less diverse. Along with the lack of formal training in multicultural education, prospective teachers often have little contact with people from various minorities throughout their programs of study. According to Bohn and Sleeter (2001), it is essential that teachers receive multicultural training in their college preparatory classes. If teachers do not have a solid background in multicultural education they tend to blame the child or the child's home life for difficulties in school if that child is from a different background than the teacher is.

Not only are teachers provided with insufficient training, but also many textbooks do not accurately reflect the diversity of America's population. "Our textbooks are certainly written from a bias, even when they try to patch on a good piece on Sojourner Truth, or some other prominent person of non-Anglo culture, it's still by and large male and

white" (Gallagher, 1998, p. 23). Instructional materials should provide factual information and perspectives which do not include racism, sexism, or other stereotypes. If any of these are present in texts, it is the responsibility of the teachers to bring these problem areas to the attention of their students (Manning, 1999).

Racial attitudes are not innate, but are developed through observation early in life by a child's interaction with his/her surroundings (Calder, 2000). A number of students come from small rural or suburban areas which are White and middle-class. These students are often unaware of the fact that their attitudes and ways of thinking are deeply rooted into their White, middle-class society (Holm, 1995). These attitudes can cause people to take a person's race into account, and make unconscious decisions about how to act towards that individual (Bhirud, 1999).

Finally, many students exhibited a lack of cultural awareness. Researchers found that the targeted third grade students had little previous exposure to issues dealing with cultural awareness. At the high school level the students did show an increased exposure to different cultures; however, there were still many areas that reflected a need for improved instruction in cultural awareness.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The United States is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse nations in the world. Faced with this challenge, education has taken strides to incorporate multicultural education into every classroom. Through literature discussions a new set of terms has been introduced to the education world. Culture is defined as "all the ways in which people live and think in the world, the shared patterns that set the tone, character, and quality of people's lives" (Kaser, 1998, p.187). Multicultural education is defined by Marulis (2000) as "showing children how to relate to each other and get along with people who are different than themselves" (p. 30). Teachers have found it necessary to promote cultural awareness beginning at an early age. Cultural awareness is about creating processes and structures that provide for the expression of many civilizations, communities, and individuals (Inayatullah & Wildman, 1995). A global perspective which encompasses communities and civilizations is defined as the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ethical reasoning that is needed to be productive in a world characterized by ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism (Taylor, 1998).

Educators need to recognize that there are both moral and prudent reasons for valuing tolerance. Tolerance includes acceptance and respect for individual differences with the allowance

of choice for all people. One challenge for educators is to promote tolerance to combat the enculturation process. Enculturation is the bias learned by observing adults in the environment. Children are not born prejudiced; they show a positive reaction to affection regardless of the ethnic background of the care giver. Bias that is shown by adults is learned by the young child. Although people are taught to cover this bias, a lack of tolerance is often lurking just below the surface (Rekha, 1994).

Several probable causes for the lack of cultural awareness in schools have been found in the professional literature. In the United States of America many different cultures coexist within the framework of a shared Constitution that guarantees that educators must work to ensure that all students are given the same opportunities. No longer are the classrooms of America made up of White children of European descent. Much more frequently, classrooms are made up of children from several different cultures and languages. Although classrooms have become more diverse, the teaching force increasingly represents the White middle class (Melnick, 1994).

Paired with the changing demographics is the lack of appropriate teacher training in the field of multicultural education. Results of a 1992 study showed that of 1,200 institutions seeking accreditation of their teacher training programs, only 14% were in compliance with the requirements for multicultural education (Zeichner, 1994). The common problem of a lack of proper teacher training in the area of multiculturalism compounds the sense of inadequacy that teachers experience when placed in an ethnically diverse classroom. Adding to the complexity of this problem is the lack of proper curriculum materials dealing with multicultural education. Many advocates of a culturally pluralistic viewpoint find that curriculum content with a more global view should be integrated into the entire elementary and secondary school curriculum (Cruz-Janzen, 2000).

A strategy discussed in the research includes improved teacher education and training.

Before elementary and secondary teachers can begin to educate their students about diversity issues, they must be educated themselves. Blassingame (2000) suggested that teachers need to enroll in as many multicultural education and diversity education workshops as possible. Merely attending a one-day workshop on multicultural education is not sufficient. A consistent and on-going program throughout any district can be more beneficial. Programs such as this allow teachers to identify and assess their personal stereotypes and biases to break down cultural barriers. On-going multicultural programs assist educators in understanding students' social behaviors from a cultural perspective (Richardson, 1998). Zeichner (1994) stated, "We need to make a concentrated effort to achieve this [multiculturalism] by changing the curriculum and instruction, and changing the way prospective teachers are selected" (p. 75). He further stated that merely learning cultural sensitivity is not enough. Teachers need to translate that sensitivity into culturally relevant practice in the classroom.

The cornerstone of a multicultural curriculum includes a character education program which combines the teaching of tolerance with the opportunity for students to investigate the values and norms of other cultures. After developing their own appreciation for differences, educators can introduce their students to other cultures through the integration of culturally and ethnically diverse literature into the curriculum (Bolling, 2001). Bryant and Schiller (2000) stated "The values we impart to our children today, consciously and unconsciously, will have a major impact on society tomorrow. If we continue to leave the teaching of values to chance, we, as a nation, risk losing an integral piece of our culture altogether" (p. 132).

Parental support is a key component to multicultural education. As Howley and Oliver (1992) stated, some strategies for parental support could include participating in the planning of curriculum, developing newsletters focusing on multicultural efforts, inviting parents to participate in multicultural activities, and conducting workshops about cultural diversity.

Although many researchers support a consistent multicultural education curriculum, there are researchers who maintain opposing viewpoints. Some educators believe multicultural education promotes a division between racial and cultural lines rather than uniting people through commonalities (Schwartz, 2001). Currently there are two viewpoints of multicultural education that have emerged.

> One vision of multiculturalism emphasizes culture and ethnic differences and the nation's failure to live up to our ideals. The second, while recognizing our ethnic differences, accentuates what Americans have in common and our positive evolution as a diverse society. (Ellington, 1998, p. 57)

Opponents contend that the multiculturalism movement fails to encompass diversity because it centers on the themes of gender and race while discrediting Western culture (Nieto, 1999). Although opposing viewpoints exist, the majority of researchers contend that the only way to unite the ethnic backgrounds of the nation's communities is through an on-going and consistent multicultural education program.

The intervention completed by the researchers focused on four different ethnic groups. The intervention began in September and concluded in December. The researchers focused on one ethnic group each four-week period and included information and activities dealing with each particular group in all areas of the curriculum. At the targeted elementary school researchers included stories, information on holidays, and arts and crafts in the curriculum. The participating elementary students took part in lessons taught by high school students. At the targeted high school researchers used guest speakers, literature selections, writing assignments, and festivals to develop the students' base knowledge of selected ethnic groups.

Project Objective and Processes

As a result of designing content area lessons to improve cultural awareness during the

period from September 2001 through December 2001, the targeted elementary and secondary students will demonstrate an increase of knowledge of other cultures and their traditions and will gain awareness and tolerance of other cultures as measured by surveys and teacher journals.

Processes to achieve the objective are:

Develop lesson plans that promote cultural awareness.

Provide a climate to promote tolerance.

Engage students in activities that promote problem solving skills and cultural awareness.

Introduce students to diverse cultures through guest speakers, field trips, holiday celebrations, role-playing, and various projects.

Action Plan

Month-September
a. Distribute parent and student letters
b. Distribute student and teacher surveys
c. Emphasis: Northern European culture
d. Family roots paper

Month-October
a. Emphasis:Hispanic
b. Mexican festival
c. Literature and role-playing
d. Problem solving activity

Month-November
a. Emphasis: African-American
b. Guest speaker
c. Problem solving activities
d. Literature based activities

Month-December
a. Emphasis: Asian
b. Art project
c. Ethnic fairy tales and activities
d. Poetry

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention focusing on activities to promote cultural awareness the researchers developed teacher surveys, student surveys, and activity surveys. The intervention was monitored by the researchers using weekly teacher journals.

The teacher survey (Appendix A) was used before the implementation of the intervention. The third grade and high school student surveys (Appendices B & C) were used before and after the intervention. The activity survey (Appendix D) were used before and after the intervention. The purpose of the surveys was to show evidence that the problem existed and the degree of success of the intervention. The teacher surveys were completed by the researchers and 40 other teachers in the targeted elementary and secondary schools. Student surveys were completed by the 45 students of the targeted elementary school, and the 34 students of the targeted secondary school. The activity survey was completed by the researchers through a conference with the targeted elementary and secondary students.

In addition to the surveys, weekly teacher journals were maintained by the researchers. The journals were used throughout the entire implementation of the intervention. The weekly teacher journals were used to show evidence of the problem, along with improvements shown by the students throughout the implementation process.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve cultural awareness of the elementary and high school students through a variety of activities and teaching techniques. Within the targeted grades there were many types of evidence that supported the need to promote tolerance and teach cultural awareness. The researchers chose to use documentation which reflected the attitudes of the students at each site. The students' and teachers' perspectives were reflected through the following methods: students surveys, activity surveys, teacher surveys, and social studies test scores.

A survey was created by the researchers to gain an understanding of values among teachers. The objective of the survey was to determine how well the teachers felt they were prepared to deal with children from ethnic backgrounds different from their own. The survey also asked teachers to evaluate the attitudes of the students in their classes. The researchers then created and administered an activity survey and a cultural awareness survey. Both were administered during the first two weeks of school in order to document attitudes and values in the classroom.

To implement the intervention the researchers divided the project into four month-long time periods each targeting a different ethnic group. At the targeted schools researchers discussed similarities and differences between cultures. The researchers required the students to research

and develop their family trees to gain insight on their own cultural background. The first month was spent studying the Northern European culture which was the heritage of an overwhelming majority of the students. The following three months were spent targeting Hispanic, African American, and Asian cultures. Over the course of the intervention, researchers exposed the students to guest speakers, experimented with international foods, introduced literature pertaining to the cultures studied, and created art activities to reflect the cultures being studied.

At the end of the sixteen weeks the students were asked to complete a post-survey. The students also completed an activity checklist following the sixteen week intervention. Throughout the intervention the researchers kept a journal reflecting on the effectiveness of the intervention.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Analysis of the data indicated the effects of improving students' cultural awareness through the implementation of cross-cultural activities. Data from the students were collected in the form of activity surveys and cultural awareness surveys. The researchers' observations were measured through journal entries. Survey results were analyzed to determine the values and attitudes of the students following the intervention. The results of the cultural awareness survey are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 shows the results of the students' attitudes and values after the intervention. Certain questions such as having a person of another culture enter their home will not be directly affected by interventions at school. However, changes can be seen in the areas where researchers were able to introduce students to new cultural traditions. Through the implementation of multicultural activities including speakers, food tasting, games and literature researchers allowed the students to experience cultures different from their own. At the conclusion of the intervention 94% of students stated that they would choose a friend of another race.

Table 6

Percentage of Responses on a Cultural Awareness Survey for Third Grade Students

Question	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Treat others	44	48	8	0	0
Been in class	4	4	16	40	36
Choose action figures	13	4	60	4	19
Hear put-downs	7	4	27	18	44
Enter home	4	8	13	19	56
Eaten food	16	14	62	8	0
Played a game	8	16	38	11	27
Heard someone speak	11	11	66	8	4
Read books	16	20	58	4	2
Choose a friend	39	31	24	2	4

n=45

Table 7 shows that the intervention appears to have modified the students' perceptions about culture and may have created a sense of tolerance. Responses to survey questions dealing with a student's home life remained similar. These results did not surprise the researchers; the impact of school interventions do not always carry over to the home. The greatest change in the responses were in the areas of hearing someone from another culture speak a language other than their own, reading literature with a focus on another culture, and eating food with an origin from

another culture. Students had a better understanding of multiculturalism, so were able to answer the survey more accurately after completion of sixteen weeks of the intervention.

Table 7

Percentage of Positive Responses on Cultural Awareness Survey Among Third Grade Students

Statement	Pre intervention	Post intervention
Treat others	98	100
Been in class	22	24
Choose action figures	53	77
Hear put-downs	42	38
Enter home	22	25
Eaten food	73	92
Played a game	40	62
Heard someone speak	62	88
Read books	64	94
Choose a friend	71	94

n=34

Table 8 shows once again that the parents have a great deal of influence on the attitudes of their children in relation to acceptance of other cultures. The high school students read novels, discussed issues regarding racial profiling, and studied customs of other counties. In addition a speaker who focused on multicultural issues on a college campus generated a discussion among the high school students. On the posttest 100% of the high school students reported that they were at least sometimes exposed to information dealing with other cultures in their classes. Researchers noted that there was also an increase in the perceived acceptance of a student of a different ethnic background if they were to move into the district.

Table 8

Percentage of Responses to a Cultural Awareness Survey for High School Students

Question	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Treat others	7	52	37	0	4
Have been in a class	4	15	37	40	4
Racial put-downs in the hall	4	7	40	23	26
Played with action figures	0	11	56	26	7
Enter home	15	4	30	33	18
Comfortable dating	30	33	23	7	7
Family offended	7	4	30	30	30
See a doctor of another race	40	37	15	7	0
New student accepted	23	48	30	0	0
Exposed to information	23	40	37	0	0

n=34

Table 9 shows the results and comparison of the students' attitudes and values after the intervention. The interventions appear to have modified the students' perceptions about culture and created a sense of tolerance. At the completion of the project several areas changed, although the results were not as dramatic as at the elementary level. Positive changes were noted in the areas of exposure to information about other cultures, and the willingness to accept a new student of another culture. Little change was noted in other areas.

Table 9

Comparison of Cultural Awareness among High School Students

Statement	Pre intervention	Post intervention
Treat others	100	96
Been in class	53	56
Played action figures	64	67
Hear put-downs	44	51
Enter home	41	49
Comfortable dating	77	86
Family offended	36	41
See doctor of another race	91	92
New student accepted	64	100
Exposed to information	65	100

n=34

Table 10 shows the pretest and posttest data of the activity survey for third grade students. Researchers noted positive changes in nearly every question. The highest percentage change concerned the students' ability to name a food of another culture. Another notable change included the students' ability to recognize a custom which their family participates in that originated in another culture.

Table 10

Percentage of Positive Responses to an Activity Survey for Third Grade Students

Question	Pretest	Posttest
Name a food of another culture	28	91
Name a tradition of another culture	33	78
Name similarity	37	87
Name difference	35	93
Select picture for journal entry	44	47
Name a problem and give solution	31	84
Would switch cultures for a month	70	87
Name foreign custom of your family	22	89

As researchers expected, table 11 shows little change in many areas. Due to the fact that the respondents were of an older age and were more constant in their value system, few questions showed a marked change. The one area that did show a notable change was the percentage of students who were able to name a similarity between cultures.

Table 11

Percentage of Responses on an Activity Survey for High School Students

Question	Pretest	Posttest
Name a food of another culture	100	100
Name a tradition of another culture	91	93
Name a similarity	32	93
Name a difference	94	96
Select a picture for journal entry	33	52
Name a problem and give solution	100	96
Would switch cultures for a month	68	74
Name a foreign custom of your family	62	59

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the review and presentation of the data the students demonstrated an awareness and tolerance for individuals of another race. The researchers concluded that it is easier to change values at a younger age than when students' attitudes are already formed. They also noted that although teachers can raise a student's awareness of other cultures they find it difficult to change the values instilled in students by their parents. The comparisons between elementary and high school students added an interesting facet to the impact of interventions promoting cultural awareness.

The most interesting insight that the researchers noted was the fact that students at both elementary and high school levels were more readily able to identify differences rather than similarities between cultures. Unfortunately, students quickly identified differences between cultures, but had difficulty seeing the commonality between all people. The implication for teaching is that educators must shift the focus from accentuating the distinction between cultures to the similarities found among all people.

The elementary teachers introduced the students to different cultures through guest speakers, food tasting, cultural games, and ethnic crafts. When the children were immersed in hands-on learning experiences, they exhibited a greater awareness and acceptance of change. Researchers also introduced students to other cultures through the use of literature. However, they noted that students responded more positively to activities as opposed to simply reading a text. Responses in the student journals displayed the fact that the students enjoyed learning about other cultures.

The impact of the interventions did not seem to be as apparent at the high school level. By the time students reach the age of fifteen many of their values have already been formed. The high school researchers also concluded that the students gained more awareness when involved in activity-based learning. The high school students were involved in cooperative projects with the third grade students. To complete the projects the high school students assisted the third grade students in making pinatas and learning about the Mexican holiday, Day of the Dead. The response to guest speakers dealing with multi-culturalism at a large university was also positive.

The high school teachers invited guest speakers to address the students on multicultural issues, and the elementary school teachers hosted several speakers who focused on different aspects of the cultures being studied. The researchers noted in their journals that students were better able to formulate questions regarding aspects of the culture after the interventions than

prior to the learning activities. For example, when a guest speaker offered the elementary students the opportunity to pose questions, they were able to formulate intelligent questions pertaining to the holidays, foods, and festivals of the culture.

Upon reflection of the action plan the researchers discovered a few obstacles to helping the students gain insight into multiculturalism. Researchers found that it was difficult to stay within the time frame boundaries set by the action plan. Also, it was difficult to find materials for some of the cultures being studied. This contributed to the increased teacher preparation time for each unit covered. The background knowledge of the teachers on the ethnic groups studied varied depending on life experiences and teacher training. Recommendations that the teacher researchers put forth would be the need for access to quality instructional materials and better training programs for new teachers entering the field. Many teachers are ill-prepared to enter a multicultural classroom, and there are few inservice programs to update veteran teachers. With the changing demographics there is a great need for all people in society to provide understanding and tolerance for those who are different. Multicultural education can be a cornerstone to a more peaceful world.

REFERENCES

Anderson, S. (1995). Multimedia multicultural instruction: Exploring diversity with a non-diverse student population. [On-line] Retrieved (1/11/01) from: <www.coe.uh.edu/insite/elec~pub/html1995/034.htm>.

Bhirud, F. (1999). Lack of racial diversity leads to awareness. Daily Trojan, 136 (41), 4-5.

Blassingame, K. M. (2000). A cultural mosaic. Techniques, 75, (2), 22-24.

Bohn, A., & Sleeter, C. (2001). Will multicultural education survive the standards movement? Education Digest, 66, (5), 17.

Bolling, A. (2001). Colorful stories. Teaching Tolerance, 19, 10-11.

Bryant, T., & Schiller, P. (1998). The values book: Teaching sixteen basic values to young children. New York: Gryphon House.

Calder, M. (2000). A concern for justice: Teaching using a global perspective in the classroom. Theory into Practice, 39, (2), 81-87.

Cohen, C. (1986). Teaching about ethnic diversity. ED273539 ERIC Digest.

Cross-cultural communication: An essential dimension of effective education. (2001) Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Portland, OR: Equity Center Publications.

Cruz-Janzen, M. (2001). Culturally authentic bias. Education,27, 132-133.

Ellington, L. (1998). Multicultural theorists and the social studies. Social Studies, 89, (2), 57-60.

Gallagher, J. (1998). Multiculturalism at a crossroads. Education Digest, 63, (8), 23.

Gomez, R. (1991). Teaching with a multicultural perspective. ED339548 ERIC Digest.

Holm, G. (1995). Cultural awareness through biographies. College Teaching.

Howley, C., & Oliver, J. (1992). Charting new maps: Multicultural education in rural schools. ED348196. ERIC Digest.

Inayatullah, S. (n.d.). The multi-cultural challenge to the future of education. [On-line] Retrieved (1/31/01) from: www.ru.org/artmulti.html.

Kaser, S. (1998). Exploring culture through children's connections. Language Arts, 75, (3), 185-192.

King, H. (n.d.). Increasing multicultural competencies for teachers through respecting ethnic and cultural heritage. [On-line] Retrieved (2/26/01) from: <www.uni.edu/coe/rengroup/schools/heritage.html>.

Manning, M. (1999). Developing responsive multicultural education for young adolescents. Childhood Education, 76, (2), 82-87.

Meachem, J. (2000, September 18). The new face of race. Newsweek, 38-41.

Marulis, L. (2000). Anti-bias teaching to address cultural diversity. Multicultural Education, 7, (3), 27-31.

Melnick, S. (1994). Teachers prepare for diversity: Cultural immersion programs. Highlights, 6, (4).

Nieto, S. (2001). What does it mean to affirm diversity? Taking Sides, 11, 118-119.

Rekha, G. (1994). Meeting the challenge of multicultural education. Contemporary Women's Issues Collection, 6, 5-6.

Richardson, R. (1998). Cultural diversity and social skills instruction. Remedial & Special Education, 19, 39-42.

Schwartz, W. (2001). Varities of multicultural education. ED98. ERIC Digest.

Takaki, R. (n.d.). Equitable practices. [On-line] Retrieved (2/23/01) From: <www.nwrel.org/cnorse/booklets/4thr/4b.html>.

Taylor, H. E. (1998). How in the world does one teach global education? Momentum, 29, (3), 16-18.

Zeichner, K. (1994). Teachers prepare for diversity: Cultural immersion programs. Highlights, 6, (4), 73-76.

Appendix A

CULTURAL AWARENESS SURVEY FOR TEACHERS

Always Usually Sometimes Seldom Never

1. My student's ethnic background is similar to my own.

---

2. I know in teachable detail about the experiences, viewpoints, and needs of various cultural groups.

---

3. I Use knowledge and experience of "multicultural" issues in selection evaluation, and revision of instructional materials that are unbiased, factual, and complete in treating minority groups.

---

4. My class(es) is socially and economically diverse.

---

5. Do you hear students using racial slurs?

---

6. Do your students hold stereotypical beliefs?

---

7. Does your present curriculum incorporate multiculturalism?

---

8. Do you feel the media perpetuates stereotypical views in your students?

---

9. Do you feel that your teacher training has prepared you to deal with students of other ethnic backgrounds?

Appendix B

CULTURAL AWARENESS SURVEY FOR 3RD GRADE STUDENTS

1. Do you treat others the way you want to be treated?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
2. Have you been in a class with a black child?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
3. Do you choose action figures or dolls other than white ones to play with?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
4. Do you hear put-downs about children who are a different color than you?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
5. Have you ever had a person of a different color enter your home?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
6. Have you ever eaten food that comes from another country?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
7. Have you ever played a game from another country?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
8. Have you ever heard someone speak in a different language?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
9. Do you read books about people from other countries?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
10. Would you choose a friend that was a different color than you?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

Appendix C

CULTURAL AWARENESS SURVEY FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1. Do you treat others the way you would like to be treated?					
2. Have you ever been in a class with a student of another race?					
3. Do you hear racial putdowns in the hallway?					
4. When you were a child did you play with action figures or dolls of a different race?					
5. How often has a person of a different race visited your home as a guest?					
6. Would you be comfortable dating someone of a different race?					
7. Would your family be offended if you dated someone outside of your race?					
8. Would you see a doctor of a different race?					
9. Do you believe a new student of a different race would be accepted at MHS?					
10. In your education have you been exposed to information pertaining to other cultures?					

Appendix D

ACTIVITY SURVEY

	YES	NO
1. Can name a food(s) particular of a culture other than your own.		
2. Can name a tradition particular of a culture other than your own.		
3. Can name a way(s)in which any culture is like yours.		
4. Can name a way in which a culture studied is different from yours.		
5. When given the opportunity to select a photo of an individual in which they would write a journal entry pertaining to a day within life, the student chose someone other than a person from their own culture.		
6. Can name a problem and project a solution people deal with when moving to a new culture.		
7. If given the opportunity to switch cultures for a month, would you switch, if yes which one and why?		
8. Can attribute a custom (food, festival, holiday) that your family participates in which originated from another culture?		

Appendix E

Week of:

Actions Taken:

Reflection:

PLUSES (+)	MINUSES (-)	INTERESTING (?)

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Promoting Cultural Awareness and the Acceptance of Diversity Through the Implementation of Cross-Cultural Activities

Author(s): Susan Keime, Melissa Landes, Gwenn Rickertsen, Nicol Wescott

Corporate Source:	Publication Date:
Saint Xavier University	ASAP

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 1	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 2A	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 2B
Level 1 ↑ [X]	Level 2A ↑ [ ]	Level 2B ↑ [ ]
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Susan Keime, Melissa Landes, Gwenn Rickertsen, Nicol Wescott	Printed Name/Position/Title: Gwenn Rickertsen, Nicol Wescott Susan Keime Melissa Landes Student/FBMP	
Organization/Address: Saint Xavier University 3700 W. 103rd St. Chgo, IL	Telephone: 708-802-6219	FAX: 708-802-6208
	E-Mail Address: crannell@sxu.edu	Date

William Crannell, Ed.D.

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC/REC
2805 E. Tenth Street
Smith Research Center, 150
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47408